

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 06510 211707Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----211710Z 047611 /45

O 211701Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2912
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 06510

EXDIS

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK
SUBJECT: FRONT LINE PRESIDENTS' MEETING IN LUANDA

REFERENCE: LONDON 6465 (NOTAL)

1. DURING COURSE OF DISCUSSION WITH GRAHAM, MANSFIELD, GRENNAN AND LAVER APRIL 21 (REFTEL), EMBASSY OFFICER ASKED FOR FCO REACTION TO THE RECENT FRONT LINE PRESIDENTS' MEETING IN LUANDA. GRAHAM SAID FCO HAD A REPORT THAT THE PRESIDENTS HAD NOT DISCUSSED THE OWEN INITIATIVE AT ALL AND THAT THE RHODESIA PART OF THE SUMMIT WAS DEVOTED TO THE PROBLEMS OF DISUNITY WITHIN THE PATRIOTIC FRONT.

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2. DENIS GRENNAN, WHO HAD REMAINED IN LUANDA AFTER THE FOREIGN SECRETARY'S DEPARTURE, SAID HE HAD MET BOTH ZANU LEADER MUGABE AND ZAPU SECRETARY SIBENDUKA (NKOMO WAS NOT AVAILABLE). GRENNAN SAID HE FOUND BOTH REASONABLE BUT THAT BOTH EXPRESSED STRONG MISGIVINGS ABOUT US CO-SPONSORSHIP OF A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE. GRENNAN ARGUED THAT THE POSITION OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT IS CON-

TRADICTORY, ON THE ONE HAND EXPECTING STRONG US ASSISTANCE IN IMPLEMENTING AN AGREEMENT WHILE ON THE OTHER INSISTING THAT THE US BE BARRED FROM THE EFFORT TO ACHIEVE THAT AGREEMENT. WHILE GRENNAN GUESSED HIS ARGUMENTS HAD LITTLE IMMEDIATE EFFECT, HE NEVERTHELESS SUSPECTS THERE IS SOME FLEXIBILITY IN THE FRONT'S POSITION. HE SAID THAT THE REASON FOR THE FRONT'S OBJECTIONS TO AN AMERICAN PRESENCE MAY BE THAT NKOMO AND MUGABE REGARD A US-UK COMBINATION AS TOO POWERFUL AND TOO INTIMIDATING.

3. GRENNAN NOTED THAT DURING HIS DISCUSSIONS, NEITHER LEADER RAISED THE ISSUE OF PARTICIPATION BY OTHER NATIONALISTS. IN FACT, HE SAID, THE FRONT MAY BECOMING INCREASINGLY AWARE OF ITS OWN WEAKNESS. NOT ONLY IS IT RIVEN BY DISUNITY AND RIVALRY; BUT MAY ALSO HAVE JUST ENCOUNTERED A REBUFF BY THE FRONT LINE PRESIDENTS. GRENNAN SPECULATED THAT MUGABE AND NKOMO HAD APPEALED TO THE PRESIDENTS IN LUANDA FOR RECOGNITION AS THE "VOICE OF THE PEOPLE" IN ADDITION TO THEIR STATUS AS THE SOLE FORCE OF RHODESIA LIBERATION. THEIR APPEAL HAD EITHER NOT BEEN CONSIDERED OR HAD BEEN REJECTED, BUT EITHER WAY THE FRONT HAD BEEN REBUKED.

4. GRAHAM SAID THAT IF THE FRONT IS INDEED IN A WEAKENED STATE THEN NKOMO MAY BE MORE TEMPTED TO BREAK OUT OF HIS ALLIANCE WITH MUGABE. EMBASSY OFFICER SUGGESTED NKOMO WOULD HAVE TO BE ENTICED OUT OF THE RELATIVE SECURITY OF THE FRONT, AND A CONSTITUTION PRECEDED BY CONFIDENTIAL

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ELECTIONS MIGHT NOT OFFER THE SORT OF GUARANTEES OF A PERSONAL POLITICAL FUTURE WHICH NKOMO SOUGHT. GRAHAM SAID IT DEPENDED ON THE KIND OF CONSTITUTION THAT EMERGED. IF THE DOCUMENT OFFERED TWO LEADERSHIP ROLES, SUCH AS A PRESIDENT AND A CHIEF MINISTER, THEN NKOMO MIGHT BE ABLE TO MAKE AN ARRANGEMENT WITH MUZOREWA.

5. GRENNAN AND MANSFIELD ADDED THAT WHILE IN RHODESIA THEY HAD NOTED HEIGHTENED TENSIONS AMONG THE TRIBES, PARTICULARLY BETWEEN THE MATABELE AND SHONA GROUPS. GRENNAN SAID POLITICAL RIVALRIES HAD ALWAYS EXISTED IN RHODESIA BUT UNTIL RECENTLY TRIBAL DIVISIONS AND ANTAGONISMS HAD REMAINED DORMANT. THE RISE IN TENSION MAKES AN EVENTUAL TRANSITION PHASE MORE DANGEROUS AND UNDERSCORES THE NEED FOR A NKOMO-MUZOREWA ALLIANCE TO BRIDGE THE TRIBAL SUSPICIONS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, SUMMIT MEETINGS, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 21-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LONDON06510
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770139-0042
Format: TEL
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770434/aaaabcyc.tel
Line Count: 115
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 96f0b0a1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 LONDON 6465
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2739518
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRONT LINE PRESIDENTS\ MEETING IN LUANDA
TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/96f0b0a1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009